forest product on forest dwelling communities including tribals.

(c) The Central Government intends to introduce a legislation in Parliament to this effect and necessary consultation is underway.

Number of elephants in the country

†4702. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the number of elephants is declining rapidly in the country;

(b) if so, the figures of number of elephants during the last five years;

(c) the major steps taken by Government in this regard keeping in view the decreasing number of elephants; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The estimated population of elephants in the country has shown an increase from 25,877 in 1997 to 26,413 in 2002 when the last census was carried out.

(c) and (d) Elephants have been included in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 which prohibits their hunting and also trade in ivory. Export of ivory from the country is also banned. India is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora (CITES) which prohibits international trade in ivory and other elephant products. Government of India provides financial assistance under Project Elephant to major elephant-bearing states in the country for protection of elephants and their habitats and also for mitigating human-elephant conflict. An amount of Rs. 13.34 Cr. was released under the Project during 2004-05. 25 Elephant Reserves have been notified in the country for the systematic and focused management of elephants. Government of India has also empowered the C.B.I. under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehend and prosecute the wildlife offenders.

Factories Polluting the Rivers in Kerala

4703. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have identified any public or private sector factories which pollute the rivers in Kerala and if so, the details thereof;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) whether any provision exists to make good the compensation from the concerned factories and if so, whether such provisions are implemented effectively and the amount of compensation realised from Kerala based factories so far, with details; and

(c) whether Government consider to initiate action against those factories which purposely violate the provisions of river pollution and create severe environmental problems; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTEROF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) As on 15.3.2005 a total of 36 grossly polluting (effluent having Biological Oxygen Demand of 100 kg per day or more) industries have been identified in Kerala. Out of 36 industries, four are closed and the remaining 32 industries are operating satisfactorily with their effluent treatment plants.

(b) The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991, provides relief to the person (other than a workman as defined in Workman's Compensation Act, 1923) affected by accident while handling hazardous substances and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. In one incident, the district Collector, Ernakulam had ordered payment of compensation to fishermen affected by a fish kill that occurred in Periyar river in the year June 1998 due to discharge of untreated effluent from FACT-Petro Chemical Division, Ernakulam. But the same was challenged in the High Court of Kerala and so far no compensation is known to have been paid.

(c) A number of actions have been initiated by State Pollution Control Board against those factories which cause pollution such as denial/revoking of consents, issue of closure orders, issue of directions for disconnecting supply of water and electricity.

Sand Mining in Coastal Areas

4704. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the intrusion of Tsunami waves was bigger scale in the coastal areas in Alleppy district where sand mining was permitted;

(b) if so, whether Government consider appropriate measures rgulating sand mining in the coastal areas; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?